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## POETRY AS A FACTOR IN EDUCATION.

PLATO thought that boys are the most untamable of wild beasts; and his opinion has had eminent supporters. Pope probably meant much the same thing when he said that schoolboys have no character. In view of this opinion, the story of Fénelon and the young Duke of Burgundy has a peculiar significance. There is, indeed, no more signal example of the immense importance of well-conceived, well-directed methods of education than the transformation which Fénelon wrought in his royal pupil. A more intractable subject probably never exercised the wits and the patience of his instructor. Before he was placed in the hands of Fénelon, the Duke was in simple truth much more of a wild beast than a rational human being. One of his chief pleasures was in kicking and biting all his attendants who approached him. At times he refused to speak a word for hours. On other occasions he would not eat, though tempted with all the triumphs of the royal cooks. His grandfather, Louis XIV., had been at infinite pains to obtain for him the most judicious attendants and tutors; but all had given up their charge as hopeless. At length Fénelon was called in. Fénelon was not without experience in dealing with young people, and he had already written a book on Education; but his peculiar fitness for the task he had undertaken was that of a character unique in charm and sympathetic insight. It is unnecessary to speak here of the marvellous skill and delicacy with which he wrought on the young Duke's nature, and how he so completely transformed him that Michelet even expresses a doubt whether in the transformation the strongest springs in the boy's character had not been broken.

In Fénelon's dealings with his pupil he had one leading idea, to which, perhaps, educationists have not given the importance it deserves. This idea was, that for every individual there is one poet who above all others appeals to the deepest instincts of his nature, and is therefore fitted

to be one of the highest forces in educating the best qualities of his mind and heart. Fénelon had not been long with his pupil before he discovered that with all his ungovernable passions he had a 'Virgilian soul'—in other words, that in the depths of the boy's nature there was that which responded to the grace and tenderness which distinguish Virgil above all other poets. Virgil accordingly was made the instrument through whom he sought to effect his ends. The result exceeded his hopes. Virgil did indeed become the Duke's favourite poet, and the chief formative influence of his brief life.

It is admitted that education at school and college as it is in these days realised is directed not so much to the formation of character as to the communication of knowledge. It is perhaps impossible that it should be otherwise. The needs of society must determine its educational code. In ancient Persia, to ride, to draw the bow, and to speak the truth, was all that the conditions of his mature life demanded of a youth. In modern England a boy is maimed in the race of life if he has not made some acquaintance with the 'circle of the sciences.' It follows from this that poetry, since it does not supply facts that can be of any practical use in life, receives but a subordinate place in our scheme of studies. All men of science would not express themselves so harshly as Newton when he said that poetry is 'but ingenious trifling;' yet there is undoubtedly a feeling abroad that when we compare him with the worker in any department of science, the poet is after all but a frivolous personage. If we have any doubt that such is the general conviction, we have but to reflect how most people would regard such a passage as this from Wordsworth. 'It is an awful truth,' he says, 'that there neither is nor can be any genuine enjoyment of poetry among nineteen out of twenty of those persons who live or wish to live in the broad light of the world—among those who either are, or are striving to make themselves people of consideration in society. This

is a truth, and an awful one, because to be incapable of a feeling for poetry in my sense of the word is to be without love of human nature or reverence for God.' Such a conception of poetry as is conveyed in these words would certainly appear to many people as in the highest degree strained and fantastic; yet it is the fact that the greatest of the world's thinkers from Aristotle to Stuart Mill have been of Wordsworth's opinion.

It was one of England's greatest lawyers who said that the wisdom of a country is to be searched for in its poets; and it was Aristotle's opinion that poetry deals with the highest forms of truth and conveys it most impressively. The production of poetry is certainly no trifling matter for the poet himself. There is, indeed, no form of mental exercise that puts such a strain on the whole man. Goethe, who is remarkable among poets for his self-control, declared that to write more than one tragedy a year would kill him; and Scott, who prided himself on his stoical self-repression, says in an interesting passage: 'I will avoid any occupation so laborious and agitating as poetry must be to be worth anything.' As far, therefore, as the expenditure of intellectual and emotional force is concerned, poetry demands as serious consideration as the most abstruse of the sciences.

The question has often been discussed whether or not the tendency of civilisation is to benumb the higher imaginative faculties. However this may be, it is at least certain that the influence of the poet of necessity diminishes as the interests of society grow more complex. In the simpler states of men the bard is, next to the chief, the most important personage in the nation. As poetry is almost universally the earliest form of literature, he is at once the historian, the law-giver, the prophet of the race. He originates public opinion, and he makes the tradition that gives birth to national sentiment. Even at comparatively late periods of a nation's development, it is extraordinary what a power the poet still wields over the minds of men. During the middle ages the words of the trouvères and the troubadours determined the ideals and formed the temper of the choice spirits of the time. When the revival of letters came, and the birth of the scientific spirit followed, it was no longer possible that imaginative literature could fill the place in men's minds it had hitherto done. Their thoughts were directed into a thousand other channels, calling into play other mental faculties, which gradually overthrew the paramount rule of the imagination. In this relation Sir Philip Sidney's delightful treatise, *The Defense of Poesie*, acquires a peculiar interest. Sidney was the last and noblest of the knights; and his passionate plea for the high function of the poet is but the expression of the sentiment of chivalry towards its trouvères and its troubadours. What poetry had been in the past to men of action, he conceived that it might still be in the future. It cannot be owing to the disappearance of poetical genius from the world that his hope has not been fulfilled, as we have had Milton and Wordsworth and Shelley since his day. The truth must therefore be that the poet has simply been jostled from his

high pedestal, and is now but one of a thousand other intellectual forces.

In one respect, indeed, the poet is as greatly honoured as ever he has been. It is frankly acknowledged by men of science of the best type that poetry is the highest expression of the human mind, and that the poet himself is the finest and rarest product of nature. Analysis has done its utmost in the way of explaining to us the genius of the poet and the essence of his work, yet both still remain the same incalculable elements that have bewildered and enchanted the mind of man from the beginning. The poet thus, even in those days of the all-pervading lights of science, sings like Wordsworth's lark in a 'privacy of glorious light.' Nevertheless, the reputed question of the senior wrangler regarding *Paradise Lost*, 'But what does it prove?' is doubtless the genuine expression of the general attitude towards poetry in the present day.

As has been said, it is idle to think that poetry can ever have that place in public instruction it once legitimately held. The conditions of modern life have made this impossible. An Athenian boy might have leisure to commit the twenty-four books of the *Iliad*; but though the discipline would doubtless be an excellent one, it would hardly be wise that the schoolboy of to-day should achieve the rival feat of committing *Paradise Lost* or the *Excursion*. Still, if we but keep before us the idea of Fénelon, poetry, even in the present condition of things, might surely be made a far more efficient instrument in education than it actually is. It has often been pointed out of late that as it is at present taught in our schools poetry is simply tortured into a fitting subject for examination. Poems are chosen for reading not so much because they are of a kind to appeal to the feelings and experience of childhood, but because they afford excellent material for an examination paper. What, for example, could be more absurd than to place *Paradise Regained* in the hands of pupils of fifteen or sixteen? That poem, the enjoyment of which, according to a high authority, is the last reward of consummated scholarship, is, in truth, of all poems in the world the best fitted to engender in a boy a life-long disgust for every form of poetic production. Short poems judiciously chosen and taught from the point of view of Fénelon would certainly go far to counterbalance that deadening of the emotional side of our nature which Darwin so sincerely regretted in his own case as the result of exclusively realistic studies.

But after all, if Fénelon's notion be correct, it lies with each to make the most fruitful application of it for himself. Thoroughly to master one poet and enter into his spirit is in any case a finer discipline than the cursory reading of a thousand. This is, indeed, the counsel of all the great masters of knowledge. Historians have been careful to tell us that they never really understood history till they had thoroughly mastered one period; and it used to be the earnest advice of an eminent Professor of philosophy to his students, that in his department the wisest course to follow was first to understand completely one great teacher.

An interesting question here suggests itself: Is it not the function of music to effect for the highly civilised societies of to-day what poetry

effected for the simpler societies of the past? It is undoubtedly the fact that music in its highest development is as peculiarly the art of the last three centuries as architecture was the art of the middle ages. It might seem to follow, therefore, that in music we should find the natural compensation against the excess of the scientific spirit. But great as are the achievements of modern music, it cannot be seriously maintained that it touches the springs of human conduct in the same degree as poetry. Music is, in truth, the 'least intellectual of all the arts,' and cannot, therefore, in the very nature of things, compete with poetry in influencing men's views of life and shaping the general course of their actions.

## MR ESHOLT'S YOUNG WIFE.

A STORY IN TWELVE CHAPTERS.

### CHAPTER VI.

DAVRY wheeled her mistress to the other end of the corridor, where was a recess in which stood what looked like a large wicker-chair without a seat. Davry pushed the easy-chair inside the wicker one, dropped a thin iron bar in front to keep it in its place, and then touching a spring, the chair and its occupant ascended slowly and smoothly to the level of the floor on the story above, and there became stationary. Davry having ascended by way of the staircase, removed the bar, and then pushed the chair before her into Miss Esholt's room.

Owing to an accident during childhood, Miss Esholt was unable to walk more than a few halting steps at a time, and altogether incapable of getting up or down stairs, though any one who only saw her sitting calm and upright in her chair would never have suspected it. No one, not even her brother, had ever heard her give utterance to a word of complaint. She was fond of travel, and, thanks to railways and steamboats, was able to get about from place to place as she pleased. It was her nurse, Davry's mother, who, by letting her fall when a child, had been the cause of Miss Esholt's lameness; and Davry had looked upon it as a sacred duty ever since to devote her life to the service of Miss Esholt and make reparation, as far as in her lay, for her mother's carelessness. She was a woman of few words, as simple as a child, her life bound round by the silver cord of duty. Davry heeded not the frivolous changes in the world's fashions, but still dressed her gaunt person as she had been wont to do thirty years before in her native village. She wore a striped linsey-woolsey petticoat; a loose print bodice, that reached a little below her waist; a white muslin kerchief, pinned high up her throat; and on her head a muslin cap, starched to an exceeding stiffness, the border of which, tortured into shape by the Italian iron, formed an appropriate scrollwork round her rugged time-worn face. If Miss Esholt was cold by nature, Davry was stony. She was like a woman who had been for years under the influence of a dripping-well, and had come back into the world partially petrified and unable wholly to regain her lost humanity. All the affection she was capable of feeling was centred in her mistress.

The room in which Miss Esholt now was was sacred to herself and Davry. With the rare exception of Mr Esholt, no one else ever set foot in it. It was library, boudoir, and sitting-room in one, and nowhere was Miss Esholt's extreme simplicity of taste more observable. The whole place, in fact, would have reminded a stranger of a business man's office more than of anything else. Miss Esholt was wealthy, and as she cared little for money, she could afford to be, and was very charitable; but her charity was always done by proxy. She subscribed liberally to all sorts and conditions of hospitals and institutions; but as for relieving any individual case of distress which might be brought under her notice, she would have considered such a proceeding as most ill-advised, and as tending rather to the moral deterioration than the physical well-being of the recipient.

Davry wheeled her mistress's chair near the fire and then waited for further orders. Miss Esholt sat for a long time without speaking, staring intently into the glowing embers: Davry stood behind her chair, immovable as a statue.

At length Miss Esholt spoke: 'Davry, he is going to get married.'

'Who's going to get married, Miss Janet?'

'Who? My brother.'

For a little space the ticking of the clock on the mantelpiece was the only sound. Davry was the first to speak.

'Then we may pack up our traps as soon as we like,' she said. 'We shan't be wanted here. Two mistresses in one house? No; that will never do.' She spoke in that tone of respectful familiarity which in days now gone used to make old domestics seem as if they were really a part of the family.

'A young thing like her to be mistress here!' said Miss Esholt with a contemptuous curl of her thin lips. 'No! his doll, his plaything, she may be, but not mistress of this house.'

'Young, is she, Miss Janet? All the worse for us, then. And pretty too, I make no doubt.'

'Pretty? Ay! My brother is no stronger-minded than other men. It's pink cheeks and bright eyes against the world with all of them.'

'We must find another home, Miss Janet,' reassured Davry in her positive way.

'Not so. No stranger shall drive me out of the house where I was born, and in which my father and mother lived and died.—Davry, I think I will go to bed.'

As soon as her mistress was in bed, Davry placed a reading-lamp on a small table by her side together with a number of books, and then, according to custom, respectfully pressed her hand and withdrew for the night.

Miss Esholt, left alone, set to work to read herself to sleep; but to-night she found the task anything but an easy one. Her thoughts would dwell on the revelation made her by her brother. She frowned, clenched her fingers, and fixed her eyes intently on her book; but by the time she had read a score of lines the words began to run one into another, and the page grew blurred before her. So she put out the lamp, and lay watching a thin shaft of moonlight that streamed in below the blind. 'O Robert, Robert!' she murmured, 'was not my love sufficient, that you must bring a

stranger into the house, who will come between us, and fling her shadow over us, and day by day push us farther apart, till at last we shall almost forget that we are the children of one mother !' Tears stood in her eyes ; but with a gesture of contempt at her weakness, she shut her lids tightly and pressed them back to their springs, and with that the bitter feeling at her heart grew still more bitter.

Mr and Mrs Esholt had been married three months. Miss Granby was also married to the curate of the faithful heart—a curate no longer, but a full-fledged incumbent with a living somewhere in the south of England.

Miss Esholt had gone to stay with some friends in London a few weeks before the marriage, and had only lately come back. She had had no wish to meet her brother and his bride in the first flush of their married happiness ; consequently, she was somewhat agreeably surprised when she found their demeanour towards each other so different from what she had expected it to be—so quiet, so commonplace, so undemonstrative. But her observant eyes soon discovered, or believed they did, the secret which lay at the bottom of this state of affairs, and the discovery only served to deepen her growing dislike to the young wife. That Robert, the best of men and dearest of brothers, the gift of whose hand and heart would have been an honour to any woman, should not be loved by her he had stooped to make his wife ! Such a possibility seemed scarcely conceivable, yet there before her was the fact, plainly observable to such as had eyes to see. Her brother's deep silent love, so unobtrusive, so delicately displayed that a stranger might have been excused for failing to notice it ; Agnes's strange caprices—for such they seemed to Miss Esholt—her long fits of coldness, of dumbness almost, and apparent indifference to everything around her, alternating with short bursts of summer-like warmth, when her whole being seemed to sun itself in her husband's love—nothing of this was unnoted by her. She saw that Agnes did not feel for her husband that deep, abiding love which, as she rightly conceived, a wife ought to feel ; but she did not understand that those very alternations which seemed to her so erratic and incomprehensible were the natural results of an affection newly born, timidly striving to put forth one shoot after another, till, by-and-by, if no untimely frost should intervene, leaves would begin to unfold themselves, and then the tender sapling would gradually grow and spread into a stately tree which no tempest would have power to uproot. Of all this Miss Esholt comprehended nothing. Her love for him gave her some gift of insight into her brother's heart, but she had no such gift in the case of Agnes.

She speedily discovered another reason for adding to the feeling with which she already began to regard the young wife. She saw that Agnes pitied her, and was full of compassion for her helplessness. This touched her pride bitterly. But she said nothing, but watched—watched incessantly, as though Agnes had some secret design on her brother's life, which it was her sisterly duty to frustrate.

Mr Esholt, reaching home each day between five and six o'clock, passed his evenings like a dutiful husband in the company of his wife and

sister, except on those few occasions when he and Agnes went to a concert or theatre together. Having dined, he would chat a little, skim the newspaper, ask Agnes to play, or to read to him half a canto of *Childe Harold*—his one favourite poem ; or sometimes he would doze a little—allowable after a busy day 'down town' and a good dinner—till eleven o'clock came, and with it the hour for retiring ; for Mr Esholt was as punctual in this as in everything else. Those long evenings tried Agnes greatly, for whether she were reading or working, or talking to her husband, Miss Esholt's cold glittering eyes were invariably fixed upon her. She felt them rather than saw them, and they discomposed her exceedingly. The love for her husband that was silently budding like a spring flower in her heart, drooped, frost-bitten and withered, in presence of that impassive, pale-faced woman, sitting propped up with cushions in her easy-chair. If, when together on an evening, she sometimes placed her hand with love's sweet familiarity in that of her husband, she felt Miss Esholt's stony gaze fixed on her with double power, and, like the coward she was, she withdrew it in an instant and locked herself up again in her reserve.

Was Mr Esholt aware in his own mind of the strange undercurrents at work beneath the seeming quietude of his domestic life ? If so, he went on from day to day like one totally ignorant of their existence, and made no sign. But he was a man whom it was given to few to read or comprehend, and it may be that he saw more of the silent warfare that was being waged under his roof than either his wife or his sister had any conception of.

Summer was now here ; and when Mr Esholt one day told his wife that he had arranged for their removal to New Brighton in the course of the following week, a glad light sprang to her eyes, which he did not fail to take note of. They were not, however, going to stay at Syringa Cottage—that would be reserved for the use of Miss Esholt and such friends as she might have to visit her ; but at The Hollies, a small villa no great distance away. This was still better news for Agnes. She would not only get away for a time from the dull, heavy, sombre Everton House, but would be to some extent relieved from Miss Esholt's constant silent supervision, which began to weigh upon her more and more—a moral incubus from which there seemed no prospect of relief—but which, she sometimes felt, would in the course of time drive her to do something desperate. Now, however, she seemed to breathe again. For a little while the burden would be lightened, if not altogether removed.

Agnes felt happier and more light-hearted than she had felt for many a day, when she found herself installed in the charming little villa which Mr Esholt had rented for the season. Every morning after breakfast she walked with her husband to the landing-stage, where he took the quarter-to-nine steamer for Liverpool. After seeing him off she and Fido, her big Newfoundland, would go for a long ramble on the sands, here, there, anywhere—what did it matter where, so long as she was in the fresh air and sunshine and away from the sinister influence of those two black unwinking eyes and that white passionless face ! After luncheon, it was pleasant to sit in



the shade of the veranda, a novel in her hand, and Fido stretched out at her feet, with the great shimmering seascape basking far and wide before her, ploughed by a hundred ships and steamers inward or outward bound—a picture pregnant with suggestions and countless dramatic possibilities to the fresh vivid imagination of the girl who sat watching it by the hour together through her dreamy drooping lids.

Between five and six o'clock she and Fido would stroll down to the landing-stage again, this time to meet Mr Esholt on his return from business. Then would follow a quiet tête-à-tête dinner, after which it generally happened either that they made their way to Syringa Cottage, or that Miss Esholt and the two friends who were staying with her came to spend the evening at The Hollies. With two ladies there to break up the usual family trio, one of whom played and sang charmingly, Agnes felt that she could afford to treat Miss Esholt's silent hostility with a certain amount of disdain. The cold watchful eyes still followed her as heretofore, and seemed to note her every word and movement, as though for the purpose of recording them in some secret diary of the brain; but so long as she was in the presence of any one other than her husband, the spell which at other times was upon her seemed to lose half its force and meaning.

There came a day when Miss Esholt's friends took their departure; but as one or two others were presently coming to fill their place, the matter seemed to Agnes one of little moment. Miss Esholt came to The Hollies to dinner the first day after her friends had left, for Robert would not hear of her dining alone. Dinner was over, and they had gone back to the drawing-room—it was one of those evenings that would not admit of their going outdoors—when Mr Esholt said rather abruptly and apropos to nothing that had gone before: 'By-the-by, Agnes, I have a little surprise in store for you. You remember a young man of the name of Wilmot Burrell, I daresay?'

The sudden mention of that name which, now that she was married, she would fain have forgotten for ever, seemed to drive the blood in a sudden rush to the young wife's heart, and in a moment she turned white to her lips. She felt rather than saw Miss Esholt's lynx-like eyes full upon her. Mr Esholt saw nothing; he was cutting the pages of a new number of *Blackwood* and skimming a paragraph here and there as he did so.

There was a brief pause, which to Agnes seemed far longer than it really was. Then nerving herself by a supreme effort, she said in low clear tones: 'Oh yes; I used to know Wilmot very well indeed. His father and papa were old and dear friends, and Wilmot used to spend most of his holidays at the vicarage.'

'Then you will doubtless be pleased to see him again. It will bring old times and recollections to your memory. I have asked him to dine with us to-morrow.'

At these words, a tremor shot through Agnes from head to foot. Her heart seemed to stop beating for a moment, as if to gather the meaning of what had been said, and then hurried on in a wild tumult. She turned abruptly to the window. Fortunately, Mr Esholt had found

something in the magazine that interested him and seemed to expect no answer.

Miss Esholt rubbed her transparent hands one within the other. 'There is some secret here,' she murmured to herself—'some love secret, most likely—some little romance of the past which madam has not forgotten, maybe does not want to forget. I must be here to-morrow at the meeting of the two.'

### THE CHAPEL OF THE PYX.

IN the eastern cloister of the abbey of Westminster there is an antique door, admitting to a remarkable vaulted chamber, built during the time of Edward the Confessor, and known as the Chapel of the Pyx. It is called a chapel probably from the fact of there being at the eastern end the remains of a stone altar, and also a *piscina* close by. If tradition may be accepted, here lie the bones of Hugolin, treasurer to Edward the Confessor, the progenitor of our Chancellors of the Exchequer. The chamber is built in two bays, with a column in the centre, from which springs the vaulting. The aspect is gloomy and prison-like, the heavily barred window not tending to diminish that effect. Although part of the abbey buildings, this is government property, for when we stand within its walls we are in the first Treasury of the English nation, and where, in medieval days, the hoarded wealth of royalty was kept under the eye and ecclesiastical guardianship of the abbot and monks of Westminster. Here, up to the time of the Reformation, the regalia of the Saxon monarchy, the Black Rood of St Margaret from Scotland (the Holy Cross of Holyrood), the Cross of St Neot from Wales, and all the later acquisitions of subsequent monarchs, were deposited. Large sums of money, chiefly for purposes of conquest, accumulated here, the money wrested from Jew or citizen helping to swell the amount.

The close connection with the religious house of Westminster, and the sacred character of the chamber, presumably consecrated its contents in the eyes of the people, for no very strict watch or guard seems to have been exercised. The cloisters of the monastery were the playground and place of relaxation of the monks, and here probably the lay friends would be admitted. Many would therefore know of the place and its contents. To break open and rob such a treasure-house would be treason and sacrilege; the latter in those days was punishable with death without benefit of clergy—a terrible sentence even when human life was held cheaply; but added to this, no sanctuary could be claimed by the sacrilegious. The chapel being hedged round with such pains and penalties, was not troubled by the medieval burglar until early in the fourteenth century.

In the year 1303, Edward I. was commencing, or rather renewing war with the Scots, a war of revenge for defeats suffered at their hands recently, and for incursions made to the south of the Border. In this new campaign, a great land-force was raised and despatched north, and a numerous fleet sailed for the same destination. The Scots were to be crushed and their country

ravaged. Fortune favoured the English, and the hardly northerners retired on every side before the three divisions of Edward's army. At the height of the victory, and while the king was at Linlithgow, news reached him that the treasury in the abbey of Westminster had been forced and rifled of the vast sum laid up there for carrying on the war. The lords of His Majesty's suite must have had a bad quarter of an hour with the king after he learned this; for to lose a sum of £100,000, intended for the purpose of a sweet revenge, must have been gall to the ambitious monarch, stopping, as it must, some of his schemes of conquest. Such an outrage on the royal property had never before been committed, and accordingly strong measures were taken. The abbot and monks of the abbey were hurried off to the Tower; and a trial, which continued for nearly two years, was commenced. The chronicler and good friend of the monastery repudiates the assertion that any of the monks were engaged in the work of spoliation; but the chapter of Westminster being entrusted with the safety of the treasure, naturally was accused of connivance with the robbery. The tribunal before whom the brethren were taken released the greater number, but condemned the subprior and the sacrist; and they paid the penalty of the crime.

The history of the sacrilegious theft seems to have been, that one Richard de Podlicote audaciously robbed the refectory of the abbey, and in the course of his search for plunder noticed the insecure state of the treasury, and discovered the nature of its contents. In concert with some lay friends and some of the clerical guardians, amongst them the subprior and sacrist, a plot was elaborated for carrying off the money intended for furnishing the king with the means of war. Early in the year 1303 this plot was carried to a successful issue, and the money abstracted without at once causing attention. The plunder was not immediately removed from the precincts of the abbey, but buried in the green enclosed by the cloister. To prevent the removal of the earth being noticed, a crop of hemp was sown, partly, perhaps, to mark the spot, and also because of its rapid growth. The gardener who usually trimmed the grass was refused admission on various pretexts, the culprits fearing his scythe might strike something richer than the earth. As soon as the matter could be arranged, the money was exhumed, and conveyed across the river to the Surrey shore, concealed in two large black panniers, and from that time was lost. Where it went, no one but those concerned knew, or who profited in the possession of so vast a sum. The monk Alexander of Pershore, who carried it over, returned to his place in the abbey, and waited with the others the bursting of the inevitable storm. In consequence of rumour, or to draw out further sums, the king's officers soon after the removal came to the treasury; and what confusion met their eyes—broken boxes, jewels lying about broadcast, papers and seals strewn the floor, the whole of the contents upset, and, to crown all, the treasure gone!

The subprior and sacrist were executed; and to mark the enormity of the offence, tradition avers the bodies were flayed—let us hope after death—and the skin nailed to the door of the chapel as a warning to those who might be sacrilegiously

minded. There is no doubting that human skin was attached to the doors, for portions were submitted to a celebrated surgeon during the restoration of the abbey, and he pronounced them human. Whether the skin once covered the unfortunate subprior and sacrist remains doubtful, as some think the owners were certain Danes who troubled English peace for a time.

After the steed was stolen, the stable door was locked; double doors were put up and five or six locks added for security. Iron bars were fixed to the windows, and the chamber reduced in size by a thick wall built across it.

After the Reformation, the regalia were removed to the Tower, where they can now be seen under the guardianship of stalwart beefeaters in their quaint costumes, or the more prosaic blue-coated police. The 'relics' were probably converted into mundane coin by the reforming spirit of the time.

The name *pyx* is derived from the box or case in which are deposited the coins, specimens of the coinage of the realm, called trial pieces. Once in every five years certain officers, appointed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Lord Chancellor, and constituting a jury, visited the chapel, whose doors with the numerous locks were opened by attendants bearing mighty keys. The duties of the jury were to inquire into the purity and weight of the coinage by assay and weighing, and give a written verdict testifying their satisfaction with the work of the Master of the Mint. On arriving in the chapel, the coins were taken out of the *pyx*, placed in paper parcels, sealed, and taken possession of by the jury. Coins were selected at hazard for testing by fire and scales; and after these operations, and in the afternoon of the same day, the verdict, written out at length, was handed to the Lord Chancellor. The document became a state paper, and probably the curious-minded may see them in the Record Office, or wherever such papers are deposited.

## A FAMILY SECRET.

### IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

#### CHAPTER III.—WHAT IS THE SECRET?

RAGE and chagrin held entire sway over the passionate mind of the Hon. Mrs Chisholm when the door closed behind Aynsley. Rage at being rebuked in her own house by a person like this young doctor for her treatment of Mina; and chagrin because she had not only failed to win him to her way of thinking, but had betrayed the real nature of her feelings towards George Chisholm's wife. Still the man must not be allowed to carry his tale to the police until she had time to consider what was to be done to accomplish her own purposes. She touched the bell, and Gedge entered.

'Go after that'—person, she was going to say, but succeeded in using the politer designation—'gentleman. Follow till you overtake him. Say that I have changed my mind, and particularly wish him to return for a few minutes. Tell him it is most important for the object he has in view.'

The Hon. Mrs Elizabeth Chisholm, née Bal-

hooley, was the eldest of eight daughters of an impoverished Irish nobleman who maintained the dignity of his ancestors by spending every penny he could get by borrowing on mortgages or from his friends, or by selling land outright. When he had money, he kept open house, and high revels were held in Castle Blaney. But the intervals between the revels became longer and longer, and at length they ceased altogether, for the master of Castle Blaney no longer had money, credit, or anything to mortgage or sell. But before the last feast he called his daughters together. 'Now girls,' said he, 'you must marry or starve, for after this ball, unless some unexpected bit of luck turns up, we won't have a farthing to bless ourselves with for two years at anyrate.'

The Hon. Elizabeth Balhooley was thus early made acquainted with the inconveniences of chronic impecuniosity; and her character was a curious compound of worldly prudence—often to the extent of niggardliness—and ambitious extravagance. She would do anything to sustain the glories of her royal race—for of course the Balhooleys were descendants of the kings of somewhere—and then she would pinch and practise all sorts of petty economies in order to balance accounts.

One of the guests at this last revel was George Chisholm, the wealthy English squire of Broadmarsh. He was middle-aged, and not intellectually brilliant, but thoroughly good-natured. The Hon. Elizabeth pounced upon him and claimed him for her own as soon as she had obtained satisfactory information as to the extent of his possessions. In her youth she had been slim and, some people thought, pretty, although she developed into a dowdy, whose figure could not be made dignified or remotely graceful by any art of dressmakers and milliners.

She secured her prize. The generous Squire made handsome settlements upon her, and they were married. The whole thing was accomplished in six weeks; and the rapidity with which the Hon. Elizabeth secured her prize astounded as well as amused outsiders. The newly married couple went to the Continent, announcing that their absence would be prolonged. At the end of ten months it was proclaimed in the *Times* and other journals that the Hon. Mrs Chisholm had given birth in Paris to a son and heir. About two years afterwards, the family returned to Broadmarsh, young George being declared by everybody to be a wonderful child for his age.

From the day of arrival at Broadmarsh till the date of his death, three years afterwards, the Squire's quiet country home was a perfect Bedlam to him—always filled with the maiden sisters, on whose account the Hon. Mrs Chisholm kept up a constant round of picnics and garden-parties in summer, dinners and dances in winter—revels in the good old style of Castle Blaney.

Before the Squire finally closed his eyes upon this giddy scene, three of the maidens had found suitable husbands, and had been married in the parish church at Sandybeach. The remaining four were subsequently disposed of to advantage by the clever scheming sister. Then that lady thought she might give some attention to the training of her son. The boy early displayed many idiosyncrasies similar to those of his

maternal grandfather. He was genial, fond of company, reckless in his sports, careless in regard to money, and left the whole management of affairs in his mother's hands. He got what he required—latterly, not always without sharp remonstrance—and he was content. The remonstrance had no effect. In his second term at Cambridge he was rusticated on account of sundry wild exploits; but he was a hero in the hunting-field, and the most notable 'gentleman rider' in the county steeplechases. His mother did not often attempt to interfere with him in anything he chose to do; and when she did so, her wise counsel was treated with so much indifference that she saw it was useless trying to control him. He always agreed in everything she said, and then proceeded to follow his own course as if she had not spoken. He was open-handed and generous when the exercise of these virtues cost him no effort.

But when he announced the date of his marriage with Mina Fairfax, the mother made a determined stand. She would never consent.

'Very well, mother,' responded George in his lazy way: 'it's a pity; but I must try to content myself without your consent. I know that you wished me to take one of my many cousins, so that the whole of my father's property should remain in *your* family. Very sorry that I cannot fall in with your views. But such is life: our pet hopes are always disappointed.'

'Is not Rhoda Hartford a girl fitted in every way to make any man happy?' demanded the mother gloomily. Rhoda was the most favoured of all her nieces, and a frequent guest at Broadmarsh, in the expectation that George would fall in love with her and marry, as it would save him the trouble of seeking a wife when one was ready provided for him.

'I daresay she will make some man happy; but I am not the man. My arrangements are already made, and so there is no use bothering yourself about it.'

She said no more; but her conduct was strange to a degree that an observer would have called unnatural. George encountered sullen, obdurate opposition every attempt he made to interest his mother in the forthcoming event. She would not see her future daughter-in-law; she would leave the room the moment her name was mentioned.

He passed over all this lightly. He thought it stupid and ridiculous on his mother's part to sulk so long because he had chosen a wife for himself and had disappointed her in not taking the one she had chosen. He had no doubt everything would come right in the end, and had no suspicion that she had any other reason for disliking Mina than was to be found in her chagrin at the overthrow of her own pet plans.

He saw little of the persistent torture Mina had to endure. At first, she was bewildered by it, and found excuses for it without speaking to her husband. She hoped that in time she would gain the esteem of her mother-in-law; or at anyrate forbearance from undisguised insult in the presence of servants and covert sneers in the presence of visitors. But as months went on the nagging became keener instead of abating, and became intolerable when Mina's babe was born. When she did venture to ask her husband to

remonstrate with his mother, he only laughed. 'Don't mind her,' he would say, in his easy-going way; 'she is a bit eccentric, but she is all right at the core. Do as I do—laugh and pass on. She has never bothered me.'

'Ah, but you do not, you cannot see'—There Mina stopped—it seemed so fearful to be making complaints to a son about the cruelty of his mother.

He did not see. The shooting season took him to Yorkshire or the Highlands; the hunting season kept him out every day; the principal races had to be attended; and there were occasional trips to London, where he spent a week or two *en garçon*, enjoying himself with his old chums at the clubs and theatres. He was quite unconscious of neglecting any of the duties of a husband. He did as he saw other men doing, and supposed that the wife's place was at home, except on ceremonial occasions. He had taken her to Paris and Rome, and twice to London during the first eight months of their union. He was ready to take her anywhere she wished to go, if she asked him. But the Hon. Mrs Chisholm always formed one of the party, and so Mina obtained little relief from the tyranny under which she suffered in the place she was obliged to call her home.

Had Mina's father lived, she would perhaps have appealed to him; certainly, she would have done so when driven to such a state of despair that she fled from the house. He, however, had died four months after her marriage, leaving his affairs in much confusion and embarrassment, owing to the utter collapse of several Companies in which he had invested his savings. This was another lever for the Hon. Mrs Chisholm to use, and she used it unmercifully.

When Mina's boy was born, he was taken from her, and given by the grandmother into the charge of a big coarse-looking woman who had been in the service of the Balhooleys for many years, and was devoted to the family. Mina wished to nurse the child herself. She was not allowed; he was to be brought up by hand, on the plea that she was too weak to afford him sufficient nourishment. She was rarely allowed to see him, despite her appeals; and yet George Chisholm was having the statement dinned into his ears that Mina had no natural affection, and did not care for her child.

When told that her boy was dead, and charged with being the cause of his death by her neglect of him, she lost her reason, and fled from the house during her husband's absence. The note of assigation was found under her pillow; and the Hon. Mrs Chisholm congratulated herself and her son on having done with 'that wicked woman,' who had cajoled him into an utterly unsuitable union.

The young Squire, however, did not take matters precisely in the way his mother had anticipated. When she showed him the note he recognised his friend Blaxland's penmanship—he knew it too well to have the slightest doubt of the genuineness of the document. This was no forgery. Then the ugly nurse, Flaherty, told him where she had found it. But, instead of cursing Mina and his friend, he cursed himself. No words of self-condemnation strong enough for the neglect of which he had been guilty were

to be found in his vocabulary. He could see it all now, although he had been blind so long. He turned fiercely upon his mother. 'I have destroyed the happiness of the best woman that ever lived,' he said hoarsely, 'and you have had a hand in it. I should have known that she could not change from the bright intellectual girl I knew, to the frightened fawn who clung to me so despairingly every time I left her, even for a few hours. It was the terror you inspired her with that made this house a pandemonium to her. I do not wonder now that she grasped at any means of escape from it.'

'George! you are beside yourself, and forget to whom you are speaking,' exclaimed the mother indignantly. 'You are in a rage with me instead of with that woman, who has brought disgrace upon us all.'

'We have brought disgrace upon ourselves. Leave me, or I shall perhaps say things to you that I would not like to remember. But it is I—I, who am to blame.'

'I think you will be the better of a little time for reflection. You have already said more than a son has any right to say to his mother.' She left the room furious, but was careful to take the compromising note with her lest he should tear it up. In all her speculations as to how he would take the news of Mina's flight, she had not foreseen the possibility of his regarding it as a wild protest against his own neglect—unpardonable neglect, as he saw things now—and his mother's unveiled dislike. She had expected him to be furious with Mina, probably to assault Blaxland with a horsewhip, whilst he took immediate proceedings for a divorce. But he was an honest fellow at the core, although too lazily self-indulgent to take action in any disagreeable affair unless driven to extremity. Now, he realised that the blame and shame were his first of all, and his mother's next.

As she stood alone in her own room, the Hon. Mrs Chisholm was mentally repeating one bitter question: 'Shall I fail?—Shall I fail? After all I have done and endured, shall I fail? Will that woman rob me of everything, and will this fool of a fellow—my son!—help her to do it? Oh, if I dared to speak—but that is nonsense. I should gain nothing but scorn if I spoke now. No; I must be silent to the end.' She had been deep in these reflections at the time when Dr Aynsley arrived, and he had presented a new vexation to her. Mina had not eloped or disappeared long enough for George to be brought to believe that she had done so or had intended to do so. She was lying ill somewhere near, and this meddling young doctor would certainly carry out his threat of going to the police station and reporting all that had passed, if he was not prevented in some way. Should George discover that a man had sought him to demand his help for Mina, and she had turned him away without granting the desired interview, the consequences might be much more serious than any she had contemplated when she answered Aynsley so resolutely. The impudent fellow must be prevented somehow from carrying out his threat; but she would find means of making him pay dearly for his partisanship.

She waited anxiously for the return of her messenger; and in half an hour, which seemed



like a day to her, Gedge reappeared. 'Did you overtake him?' she queried eagerly, before the door was closed.

'Yes, ma'am. He was stopped at one of the cottages to see a sick child.'

'Is he coming back?'

'No, ma'am. He sends his compliments, and says he will wait at home until one o'clock—the address is on his card—and if you and Mr Chisholm will call before that hour, he will discuss the business further.'

'Tell Dent to get the carriage ready immediately. I am going out.' She swallowed the humiliation of having to submit to this fellow's dictation, and decided to go to him at once. But she would not ask George to accompany her.

On reaching John Aynsley's modest residence, she was shown into the consulting-room. It was a cold-looking apartment: linoleum on the floor, four chairs and a couch covered with brown leather, a writing-table, and a large bookcase covering one wall, comprised the furniture. 'Poor,' was the Hon. Mrs Chisholm's sniffing comment as she surveyed the place. 'I daresay matters can be arranged.'

Aynsley entered the room and bowed coldly. Before he could speak, she opened the conversation with effusive graciousness.

'I followed you at once, Dr Aynsley, in order to express my regret for being apparently so ungrateful for your kindly efforts on our behalf. But you must make allowances—I am sure a man of your experience and gifts will make allowances for the distracted state of my mind in seeing, as I believed, my son's whole life wrecked by the conduct of the woman who should have been everything good to him.'

'I can understand that the letter you showed me must have caused him the greatest pain,' responded Aynsley, with a grave look into her eyes; 'but I had hoped that Mr Chisholm would have come with you to discuss the best measures that may be devised under the circumstances. A very grave mistake has been made in regard to Mrs Chisholm's conduct.'

'It was impossible. He is perfectly prostrate with grief and shame, and a little more excitement might have fatal consequences. Consider—his child lying dead in the house, deserted by its mother! It would have been cruel to disturb him.'

'I should have thought he would have been relieved by learning that the mother had deserted neither him nor his child,' was the dry rejoinder.

She winced, but went on volubly. 'Would he have been able to accept that assurance at once? No. I have telegraphed to Norwich for the only medical man he has ever agreed to consult. When he has seen him, we can decide what is to be done. Meanwhile, I throw myself entirely on your consideration. Do whatever you think is best for Mrs Chisholm, and I will be responsible for all charges. Then, as soon as she and my son have recovered strength, we—that is, you will explain matters, and a reconciliation will follow. That is, I think, the best course for me to adopt for my son's sake, and for you to take as a friend of the unhappy wife.'

The proposal was reasonable, and if George Chisholm was in the condition she described, there was no alternative course that a sensible man

could take for the benefit of the principal persons concerned in this melancholy affair. And yet, in spite of her apparently sincere anxiety to put matters right, he felt that the woman was false, and had some ulterior motive for this entire change of humour towards Mina.

'I will do as you desire, madam,' he said gravely, after a few minutes' reflection, 'on condition that you do not ask me where Mrs Chisholm has found a refuge until I can tell you in the presence of her husband.'

'I will be guided entirely by you, Dr Aynsley,' was the almost humble answer. 'But you will of course now do what you can to prevent any publicity of this miserable affair, and there will be no application to the police—you said that you wished to spare her the scandal such a proceeding would involve.'

'And I do. My desire is to restore her to Mr Chisholm as quietly as possible.'

'Oh, I am so grateful! Thank you—again and again, thank you. I do not attempt to disguise the fact of which you are aware that my daughter-in-law and I do not get on well together; but that will not prevent me from doing my duty to my son.'

'Until I can see him, I will do nothing more than see that all Mrs Chisholm's wants are properly cared for.'

'Thank you, once more; and for the present, please use this on her account.' She placed four five-pound notes on the table, and took her leave, promising to call next day to learn how the patient was progressing.

As she was being driven away, John Aynsley was asking himself this curious question: 'What motive *can* the woman have for this determination to part Mina and her husband?'

The Hon. Mrs Chisholm's round florid face became dark as soon as she was seated in the carriage and her back turned upon the doctor's house. Her lips were closed tightly, and there was an evil light in her eyes. 'Before to-morrow morning,' she was thinking, 'I shall have discovered where that woman is hidden, in spite of the precautions of this friend of hers. Before to-morrow night, George shall leave Broadmarsh; and before he returns, it will be too late for any reconciliation.' There was a cruel smile of triumph on her face, and the evil light in the eyes became more intense.

As the carriage stopped, the hall-door was flung open by Gedge, and he descended the steps to wait on his mistress.

'Has your master asked for me?' she inquired as her feet touched the ground.

'No, ma'am; but he has gone out.'

'Gone out! When?'

'About half an hour ago. He did not call for anything; but I was on the watch, as you instructed me, and spoke to him as he put on his hat in the hall. I inquired if I could do anything for him. He said "No" quite short, and went out.'

'Did he walk or ride?'

'Walked, ma'am, down through the meadows, as if he was going over to the Denes.'

'In the direction of Mr Blaxland's?'

'I think so, ma'am.'

'Let the carriage wait, and tell Flaherty to

come to me at once.' She proceeded to her dressing-room and threw bonnet and cloak aside. The information that George had gone out was alarming; but if, as she supposed, he had gone to inquire about Harry Blaxland, he would learn—as she had already done—that his friend had gone to London on the previous day, leaving no address, and giving no date for his return. That would confirm the impression made upon George by the note which had been found under his wife's pillow. But if he should happen to meet Dr Aynsley, he would learn where Mina was; he would go to her, and there would be an end of the hope the Hon. Mrs Chisholm cherished of separating the two. She had schemed for that object ever since the marriage, and circumstances had singularly favoured her up to this point. Now, if he should discover that she knew Mina had not gone away with Blaxland, he would suspect all the rest, and would turn upon her. Easy-going as he was in every way, once his passion was aroused she knew that it was uncontrollable, and he became capable of the wildest action. But she did not fear him, if prepared beforehand to encounter his wrath; for she believed that it was in her power to compel his submission to her will. To do that, however, would involve a confession on her part which she would rather not make.

A sharp knock at the door and Biddy Flaherty entered. She was a tall gaunt woman with hard sharp features and cunning gray eyes. Although fifty-five, she was strong and active. As already stated, she had been in the service of the Balhooys since childhood, and was devoted to the Hon. Mrs Chisholm, whom she always addressed as 'me lady,' that being a bit of playful Hibernian flattery which by no means displeased her mistress. This was the person who had been forced upon Mina as a nurse at one of the most trying periods of a woman's life, the birth of her first child; and this was the woman to whom the poor child had been entrusted.

'Did you see the man who called here this morning?' inquired the mistress.

'Av coorse I did, me lady. D'ye think any man can come here without me seeing them?'

'Would you know him again?'

'As aisy as I'd know your own sweet self, me lady.'

'He is Dr Aynsley; this is where he lives' (pointing to the doctor's card on the table). 'I want to learn what patients he calls on to-day, and, if possible, their names.'

'If I wance get sight of him, I'll know everything he does till he goes home for the night.'

'It seems that woman has not gone away, as we thought, but is somewhere in the neighbourhood under the care of this doctor. He will not tell me where she is, and I want to find out.'

'More shame for her to be skulkin' about the place after what she's done. But I'll find out where she is, me lady, you may go bail for that.'

'As soon as you find out, get a cab and come straight to me. I wish to spare my son the pain of meeting her until he has recovered from the shock she has caused him.'

'Oh, the poor gentleman!—it's the wondher to me that he can think of her at all now.'

'Get yourself ready at once. Dent will drive

you as far as the Yarmouth workhouse. Get out there, and walk the rest of the way. Tell Dent he is to come home, and be sure you do not let him know your errand.'

'An' sure me lady knows she can trust me to howld me tongue.'

Biddy Flaherty departed on her errand and her mistress watched from the window. The Hon. Mrs Chisholm's expression was an unpleasant one—full of anxiety mingled with spitefulness. 'Must it all come out in the end?' she asked herself whilst looking vacantly across the lawn. 'Well, if it does, there will be scandal, of course; but I will get the credit I deserve for the sacrifice I made, and George will have reason to be sorry for having driven me to extremity.'

### VARIABLE STARS.

Few persons unacquainted with astronomy fail to express surprise on first learning that there are stars in the heavens whose light is variable. Stellar variability seems at first sight incompatible with the stable and eternal character of the heavens, and gives one the idea of change and evanescence among the celestial bodies. But that such a fact should be associated with the waxing old of the firmament is the result of ignorance and preconceived opinion, as the phenomena of variability have probably been recurring with undisturbed regularity for thousands and thousands of years.

Several scores of these variable stars, as they are called, are visible to the naked eye, and their changes may be watched by any one sufficiently well acquainted with the face of the heavens; while, when we call in the aid of the telescope, the scores rapidly increase to hundreds. Indeed, it is not too much to say that could the millions and millions of stars at present known to astronomers be subjected to rigorous scrutiny, probably many thousands would prove to be variable. These marvellous objects present little uniformity of character; they differ from one another in magnitude, period, and range of variation. Some are very bright; others, even at their maximum brilliancy, invisible to the naked eye. One changes so little that it is difficult to determine its variability; another runs through a scale of fluctuation extending to five or six magnitudes. In period, again, or the time from maximum to maximum, there is the utmost variety. Some complete their cycle of changes in a few days; others occupy many months; several have been steadily decreasing in light within historic times; while with temporary stars, their appearance is so rare, and our term of observation so limited, that it is impossible to say whether their changes occur periodically, or whether the sudden increase of splendour is to be regarded as the announcement of a stellar catastrophe.

The space at our disposal is much too limited to give an account even of the most important of these objects, but we may perhaps be allowed to draw attention briefly to two of the most rapidly variable in the northern heavens. The more conspicuous of these is situated in the constellation of Perseus, and was known to the old astronomers by the name of Algol, or the

Demon. For about two days and thirteen hours this object remains quite steady as an ordinary second-magnitude star, and during this time presents no appearance of peculiarity. At the end of this period, however, it suddenly begins to diminish in splendour, and goes on fading till, in three hours and a half, it has decreased to the fourth magnitude. This brilliancy is retained for the remarkably short space of only eighteen minutes; and in another three hours and a half the star has regained its original splendour. When one remembers that this object is not a mere light hung up in heaven, but an immense luminary like our own sun, some idea will be gained of the nature of the causes that are able to produce such change. The other object, though much fainter than Algol, being, in fact, scarcely visible to the unaided eye, is even more rapid in its fluctuation. It is situated in the constellation Cepheus, but being an inconspicuous object, has not the honour of a popular name. This is the most rapid variable known. Its range, like that of Algol, is a little over two magnitudes; but its rate of diminution is nearly twice as rapid, as it passes from the seventh to the ninth magnitude in two hours. The change of light is accompanied by a remarkable change in colour, the star being bluish at maximum and ruddy at minimum, with intervening gradations.

What explanation have scientific men been able to give of these phenomena? At an early stage, it was suggested that diminution of light might be occasioned by the intervention of a dark body, as a satellite, between us and the primary; and in the case of such rapid variables as Algol, in which the changes are effected in a few hours, some such explanation seems absolutely necessary. But the weakness of this theory is that, while accounting fairly well for variation in stars of short period, it fails altogether with those whose changes are slower and more prolonged. However plausible it may seem that a temporary decrease of light of a few hours' duration might be caused by the sweeping of a dark body across the face of a star, it is evident that when the change in brightness is so gradual as to extend to weeks, months, and even years, the explanation breaks down, without at least assuming motions in distant heavenly bodies as sluggish as those in our own vicinity are rapid. Nor, in addition to this, must we overlook the high improbability of the plane of revolution of these attendant dark bodies coinciding in so many instances with our line of vision. Thus, though the satellite theory has at the first blush an air of plausibility, it must be regarded as utterly inadequate to explain any save a small portion of the phenomena.

Another theory has been advanced, accounting for variability by the presence of dark areas on the surface of these distant luminaries, the alternate apparition of the dark and bright portions as the body rotates on its axis causing an alternate diminution and increase of splendour. The same objection applies to this explanation as to the last, for in the case of a star which has been gradually fading during many generations, it is plain that we must suppose a rate of rotation altogether at variance with ascertained facts, nothing being more surely established than that the motions of the celestial bodies are rapid almost beyond conception. Nevertheless, in a

slightly modified form this theory is not without some degree of probability. The star nearest us, and about which we have the fullest information, namely, our own sun, is nearly always marked with a greater or less number of dark portions, called spots, which have regular maxima and minima, with periods differently estimated by different observers, but generally believed to be about eleven years. These spots must in some way influence the amount of light and heat emitted by the sun, though the difference is to us imperceptible; and were they very much increased, it seems unquestionable that our sun would appear to the inhabitants of a neighbouring system as a variable star with a period of eleven of our years. The only objection to this theory is that we require to explain the explanation. To say that the change of light is caused by the presence or absence of dark areas recurring at stated intervals, is simply stating the problem in different terms. What is the cause of the dark regions, and why should they recur at stated intervals? Why should some stars be exempt from them, and others condemned to their periodic eruption? Must the first be regarded as in the full flush of life and vigour, while the latter are moving down to decrepitude and decay? What are we to make of those stars that have been slowly fading since the first astronomers recorded their observations, or what of those whose change of brilliancy is accompanied by a change of colour? These questions raise difficulties with which the theory is unable to cope, and which with our present knowledge we cannot explain. Meantime, astronomers continue to record observations, to heap particular on particular, in the hope that when the mass has become sufficiently large, some great law will loom vaguely into view, and reward the labour of centuries. If we were allowed to express an opinion, we should predict otherwise. Probably the discovery will be made in an entirely different manner—perhaps in the dingy laboratory of the chemist or the physicist. Some new fact as to the shiver or clash of atoms, some unobserved peculiarity in the behaviour of light or heat, will flash suddenly into view, and in a moment reveal the great law which underlies and governs these strange phenomena.

#### 'SCOT.'

THE canine race have of late been much before the public mind. The exertions of Messrs Pasteur, Henderson, and Warren have rendered it impossible for them to complain of being overlooked or forgotten during the past two years. Indeed, they seem to be rising daily in the scale of social importance; and this emboldens me to lay before a sympathising public one of my many and varied experiences in connection with our four-footed friends.

I am a great lover of dogs; so is my wife; we are childless, and console ourselves by bringing up small families of quadrupeds, whom some of our friends—whose tables are richly set about with olive branches—occasionally observe are more tractable and grateful than the more costly and troublesome bipeds. Like most dog-lovers,

I prefer thoroughbreds; and the first years we lived in London we were the anxious possessors of a pair of 'show' fox-terriers. But their constant unaccountable disappearances, and recovery at considerable cost of time and money, exhausted my patience, and threatened to exhaust my purse; so that, when death removed these little friends, I determined to be no longer a source of income to dog-stealers, and hence resolved to fill the vacant post of household pet with a mongrel.

If there is one thing of which I am a judge, it is a dog. I do not mean merely learned in the 'points' of different breeds; but that, given the opportunity of observing the shape of a dog's head, the cock of his ears, the way he carries his tail, the expression of his eye as he follows his master—I will tell you whether that dog is worth making a friend of or not; and I have never found myself mistaken in a dog whose appearance pleased me. Therefore, my wife and I were agreed that I should look out for a good intelligent dog of a size and disposition difficult to make 'disappear,' and so decidedly a mongrel as not to be worth stealing outright.

While we were still (metaphorically) in mourning for the last of the fox-terriers, we found ourselves in an out-of-the-world village high up among the hills of the Derbyshire Peak. Here I saw a sheep-dog, which I felt sure would suit us exactly: a straight-limbed, broad-chested, dignified-looking animal, about the size of a collie, but stouter built and short-haired; of an uncommon blue-gray colour mottled with black, white points, and a pair of curious 'wall-eyes,' the iris like a bit of pale, blue-white china. The lines of the head and the expression reminded me of the dog in Landseer's 'Shepherd's Chief-mourner.' This dog was invariably seen half a yard behind his master, who was the village butcher; and one day, encountering the pair in the bar-room of my inn, I endeavoured to establish friendly relations with both. The dog received my overtures with great reserve; and when, with sad want of good taste, I pressed my attentions on him, he slowly rose, and with a glance of his eye from me to his master, which plainly said, 'My concern is with *him*, and I can have nothing to do with strangers,' withdrew under the settle. I subsequently pointed him out to my wife, telling her that in that dog we should find all we sought.

'That wild-looking creature! with glaring white eyes and a coat like bilberry dumplings!' exclaimed she. 'Why, we should be mobbed, if we took him out in London!'

Notwithstanding this protest, I took the first opportunity of meeting master and dog in the bar-parlour, and—his local value being ten shillings at most, bought him for fifteen; and by the help of a command from the butcher, 'Go on, Scot,' led him into our sitting-room and presented him to his future mistress. Whether he understood the bargain struck in the bar, or by what means he grasped the situation, I cannot say; all I know is that, though his late

owner's shop was only across the road, he never made an attempt to return to him; indeed, he scarcely took any notice of him if we happened to meet. I do not think this was ingratitude, but arose rather from a keen sense of what was due to a new master moving in an altogether different position in life. By the time we were returning to London, Scot had not only attached himself to us, and grown perfectly accustomed to the more refined habits and manners of the society in which he now moved, but had justified my opinion of him by showing a great amount of general intelligence. Bringing him, as we did, from a part of the world where two vehicles appearing in the village at once was looked on as quite an excitement, we were afraid he would lose his head in the crowded and noisy streets of the great city. We were agreeably surprised to find that, beyond fixing his eyes anxiously on my back and keeping well to heel, the first time I took him up Oxford Street, he showed no sign of nervousness or fear; and in a few days was quite at his ease, following a 'bus with myself outside in a most collected and business-like manner; and on once losing me in the press at the Marble Arch, returning promptly to our house in Notting Hill.

After a time, finding that from any place to which he was taken on foot, he would find his way home, and that he never allowed any one to take liberties with him in the street, or responded to the blandishments of strangers, we felt that he could scarcely be lost or caused to disappear; and as he certainly was not worth stealing, we rested happy in the belief that only death would deprive us of Scot. His appearance, too, being so strikingly odd, we flattered ourselves that if anything did happen him, we could not fail to trace him easily and speedily.

Three peaceful years followed. Scot endeared himself to a large circle of friends by his urbane manners, amiability, and general intelligence; became quite a feature in our square, and was well known in the neighbourhood; for he would sit patiently for an hour at a time outside a shop-door, with his opal eyes fixed on the spot where he had last seen my wife's retreating figure. Sometimes a knot of admirers would surround him, talking to him and stroking his grizzled head; but Scot, though he bore what he considered their ill-timed caresses with unfailing good temper, never withdrew his attention from the business of the moment—watching for his mistress. Respond he would not.

Three happy years went by, and then came the Henderson ukase—Muzzles! Scot remonstrated so pathetically against the double infliction of collar and muzzle, that, telling ourselves the name and address upon it could be of no service, since he never got lost, we, in an evil hour, removed the former; and 'Old Scot'—as he was affectionately called, though only now four years of age—trotted about, presenting his muzzle to every human friend he encountered, requesting its removal in the plainest language. This he did with the persevering and trusting hopefulness of a dog who has never been neglected, and feels sure he has but to make his wants understood to have them attended to. One day—a black and fateful day in the annals of modern



London, a day of frost and ice, of riot and fog—my wife and I started early in the day to skate at Hendon. Scot accompanied us to the nearest Metropolitan Station, and was then told to go home. We believed he went; he had never disobeyed us before, and we never dreamed he would do so then. Returning at past six o'clock, there was no sniffing under the door, no impatient whine and scratch, no boisterous greeting as the door opened.

'Scot, sir?' said the servant, interrogatively as we entered.

'Did he not return?' we asked in surprise. No; he had not returned. But we were not really uneasy; he had probably made himself a self-invited guest at the house of some friend near, as he had once or twice previously done. If he did not return before the house was closed for the night, we could send for him in the morning. It was only when we found he was not at any friend's house, that we became anxious, and reflected, that being without a collar bearing his owner's address, the police, in their new-fangled zeal, might, though muzzled, 'run him in;' or, worse still, being muzzled and defenceless, he might even have been made to 'disappear.'

We first made inquiries in and about the station whence we had dismissed him; these, however, led to nothing, and then began the weary round of police stations and Dogs' Homes, with, as usual, no result. Of course the police promised to do all they could. All they did was this: two days after our loss, while I was out, an inspector called, and was received by my wife. He was a youngish man, of bashful manners, who informed her that a dog 'answering to the description' had been found that morning sleeping in a square close by.

'That is not our dog. If he were loose anywhere within ten miles, he would come home,' promptly decided my wife.

After this, advertisements appeared in different papers offering a reward for the restoration of a 'Mottled Black and Gray Short-haired Sheep-dog, with wall-eyes, white points, long tail, with white tip,' &c.

'We shall not be troubled as we used to be when the fox-terriers were lost,' said my wife hopefully. 'Gray dogs are uncommon, so are "wall-eyes;" in fact, there is not a dog in London like Scot. We shall have but one brought, and that will be the dear old fellow himself.'

And I confess I had also some such idea. But we reckoned without the host—of fools, which London can produce at a moment's notice anent any occasion or subject whatsoever.

The first advertisement brought us a small but choice assortment of dogs. No. 1 arrived early, carefully led by one man, the expedition being conducted by a second, who was spokesman. It was a spotted carriage-dog of Dalmatian breed.

'This is not a sheep-dog,' I said.

'Advertisement said "wall-eyes," sir, and a long tail; and this has wall-eyes and a long tail, sir.'

'Very well; leave the eyes and tail, then,' said I, intending to be severely ironical: 'the rest does not answer to the description.'

The man grinned, and, on the strength of my joke, asked for a glass of beer. This being politely refused, he retired, to be speedily suc-

ceeded by a Whitechapel rough, leading a miserable, dirty, curly-coated, brown mongrel.

'Beg yer pawdon, sir,' said this worthy, 'but be this yer dog?'

'Can that by any stretch of imagination be called a gray sheep-dog?' I asked indignantly, trying to shut the door, which the rough held open with his hobnailed boot, while begging me to consider that he had walked all the way from the east end, &c. A few determined words, however, sent him off cursing; and I felt sorry for the poor brute—I mean the four-footed one.

The third animal submitted to us was a large half-bred hound, liver colour and white, with a black spot on his back—on the strength of which he was brought—and a pair of lovely blue hazel eyes, which seemed to plead that he might be owned and taken in.

For the remainder of that day, and—our advertisement being repeated in the leading dailies—for many days after, not only did dogs of all sorts, sizes, and colours arrive at frequent intervals for inspection, but letters came by every post, and even two or three telegrams, from all parts of London, its suburbs, and for fifty miles round, from the Midland counties and the south coast, informing us that dogs 'answering to the description' might be seen on applying to the sender.

At first, either my wife or I went to all places within reach, to see—collies, terriers, mongrels, black, tan, white, liver-coloured, long-haired, curly-coated, bob-tailed, or no tail at all—animals whose sole claim to 'answer to the description' consisted in their belonging to the canine race; for in some cases they were not even of the right sex. After a time, we got wary, required detailed particulars, and sent photos of Scot in the first instance, which plan we also pursued in the case of more distant correspondents; but even with these precautions, we took one or two tiresome journeys, only to encounter disappointment. It was not merely that every one seemed to have gone colour-blind, but that most persons appeared to think that if a dog 'answered to the description' in one point, that was quite sufficient reason to suppose it ours; if in two—the evidence that it *was* ours was held to be overwhelming; and when we had the hardihood to declare that it was *not* ours, they evidently considered themselves ill-used, and in more than one instance plainly showed that they thought I alone was to blame for the useless trouble they had had, and therefore that it ought to be made good to them.

'My dog was described as long-tailed,' I would remonstrate, 'and this one has no tail.'

'But it is wall-eyed,' would be the reply.

Or my objection, 'This dog has not got a gray hair on him,' met with the rejoinder, 'He's a sheep-dog, and has a long tail with a white tip,' and this in a tone of conviction, as who should say: 'If he's not your dog, all I can say is, he ought to be.'

In one particularly aggravating case, where information was brought of a dog kept mysteriously in a backyard, and I, after some difficulty, obtained sight of an animal which, beyond possessing four legs and a head, bore no single point of resemblance to Scot, I indulged in a little strong language, and my informant, in a deeply aggrieved tone, remonstrated thus: 'I

got a bone, held it out, and called "Scot, Scot!" and he came up wagging his tail and took the bone; so *in course* I made sure it was yours!"

After a certain time, seeing that this was no mere 'disappearance,' I had offered a reward of double the dog's value for 'information leading to his recovery.' Upon this, a perfect rain of letters set in, the orthography and style of some of which were amusing; for example: 'DEAR SIR in respec of yer notiss i seen the dogg he cum into our Shop i givim a Biskitt wich you did not name is name so plees rite and say also if your dogg is a Ladye dogg yours to comand,' &c.

Some were aggravating, as, for instance, two advising me 'to apply at the Dogs' Home;' and one—from an elderly spinster, I feel sure—informing me 'that she had always found the police most useful in restoring valued dogs.'

But the most original was one from a gentleman claiming the rank of captain in the army, who stated that 'he knew where the dog was, but should require the reward to be forwarded by post ere he parted with the information.' This demand showed a touching confidence in the guilelessness of my nature and anxious affection for my pet, that was not justified by results.

At last, having done all that could be done—advertisements and handbills having been as widely spread as was in our power to spread them, exhaustive inquiries having been instituted to ascertain if he had been in any way killed; a humble friend of ours 'in the trade' having communicated in a friendly way with others 'in the trade'—nothing was left for us but to await the result.

Alas! reader, we are still awaiting the result, or rather, since many months have passed, we have ceased to expect any. Our mongrel dog—truly 'of no value to any but the owner'—in spite of widely offered rewards of four times his intrinsic worth, his singular appearance, and his keen intelligence, has finally—disappeared.

#### CIVIL SERVICE REFORM.

To the very numerous class of young men and young women who are regulating their studies in accordance with the announcements of Her Majesty's Civil Service Commissioners, it will be an interesting and almost exciting piece of news to learn that Sir Matthew Ridley and his colleagues, who were appointed to conduct a special inquiry into the Civil establishments, have issued a second Report, containing a variety of recommendations as to the better organisation of government offices. The subjects of their inquiry are of the greatest possible interest to all who look forward to becoming servants of the Crown, and it is satisfactory to notice that to a large majority of these anxious ones the result must prove reassuring and gratifying. 'The numbers, salaries, hours of labour, superannuation, cost of the staff, and the administration, regulation, and organisation' of the Civil establishments have now been once more pretty thoroughly investigated—that is, so far as the mere taking of evidence may be held as equi-

valent to an investigation. No deliverance is yet given, however, on the vexed question of the amalgamation of the Inland Revenue and Customs departments, and to that extent the candidates will for some time be kept in a state of suspense. A very considerable extent of ground has nevertheless been covered, and many wise suggestions have been put forward.

In saying that the result of the inquiry will be gratifying to the majority of candidates we mean that the suggested changes will tend to the benefit of the rank and file as such. They will not probably increase their chances of securing any of the 'prizes' of the service, for these prizes are in future to be much less numerous. This provision will of course fail to commend itself to candidates for the Higher Division—that is, those who are required to pass an examination practically equivalent to a university degree, so that they may be prepared to take broad views of public business, and do the responsible work involving discretion and judgment, as distinguished from that which is 'purely clerical.' It has been decided that the latter class of work is more largely predominant in government offices than the outside public have been led to suppose, and therefore economy can be effected by a reduction in the number of highly paid clerks. This saving on the one hand will enable the government to be somewhat more liberal in their treatment of Lower Division clerks, who, by the way, are to be propitiated with the title of 'Second Division.'

At present, the Lower Division clerk entering a seven hours' office receives £95 a year, and advances by triennial additions of £15 to £250, with the chance of some day receiving £100 extra for special duties, such as superintendence. Ever since this scale was established, it has been recognised that while its treatment of the raw recruit from school errs on the side of liberality, the progression towards the maximum salary must appear somewhat slow after family responsibilities have been assumed. It must be distinctly understood that the extra emolument or 'duty pay' of £100 (or less) cannot be reckoned on as a prospective benefit, but is dependent to a large extent on accidental circumstances—such as, the number of the staff, the vacancies that may occur, and perhaps in some cases the whim of a superior officer. These defects in the Lower Division system appear to be satisfactorily dealt with in the Report. The commencing salary is reduced to £70, and the rate of increase is £5 a year until £100 is attained. Then, with a satisfactory certificate, the clerk will progress by annual additions of £7, 10s. to £190; and finally, if he has proved his fitness for further advancement, he will proceed by additions of £10 a year to a maximum of £350. This point is now reached only in exceptional cases: in future it will be open to all men of character and ability. The chances of still further advancement must, from the nature of the case, be slender, as the higher posts are to be few in number, and some of them

at least will be filled by those whom we may term university candidates. Nevertheless, no hard and fast line has been drawn to bar 'exceptional ability' from rising to its proper level.

To the First Division it is hoped to attract men who would otherwise enter a profession with a fair prospect of success. To induce men of the requisite capacity to take part in a competitive examination with a view to entering an office, a minimum salary is suggested of £200, rising by £20 to £500. Clerks of the second grade would progress by annual additions of £25 from £600 to £800; and in the third grade the scale would be £850 by £50 to £1000.

As to the examinations, no serious modification is proposed. As optional subjects for Second Division candidates—although in a competitive examination all subjects must be practically compulsory—shorthand and one modern foreign language are with some hesitation recommended. It would not be very surprising, however, if shorthand were made compulsory, and the suggestion as to a foreign language ignored altogether. The higher examination is disposed of by the simple suggestion that thoroughness is the quality most to be coveted in advanced studies, and therefore it might be advantageous to limit candidates to a few subjects which must be thoroughly mastered.

There will probably be no disposition in any quarter to contest the propriety of adopting a uniform official day of seven hours, or of compelling those who look forward to pensions to contribute five per cent. of their salaries towards this great and growing expense, especially as these contributions are to be repaid with compound interest in the event of no pension being granted. The necessity also for transferring clerks from one office to another, instead of engaging new ones who are not required, is so obvious as to call for no remark; and whatever difficulties may hitherto have prevented this reasonable arrangement must in future be overcome. The retention of elderly officials, irreverently designated 'fossils,' has often given rise to grave discontent, and forms the subject of three simple proposals. The age for compulsory retirement is fixed at sixty-five; but if the interests of the service seem to require it, a clerk may be 'retired' at sixty; while, on the other hand, if specially invited by the government, he may remain in office until seventy. The absolute prohibition from taking part in the management of trading Companies is a measure which could scarcely be avoided; nevertheless, it must call forth angry protest from those affected, on the ground that government has no concern with the leisure time of its servants. Probably nothing in the Report is more emphatically insisted on than the need for promotion by merit, although of course the witnesses did not fail to indicate the risks attendant on such a system. The superior officer in the Civil Service has little interest in the efficiency of the person he promotes, whereas the private employer would feel that his business interests were at stake in the transaction. For this reason, it has generally been held the safer course to promote the senior in the absence of special disqualification. Before, however, we can arrive at any conclusion on this point, we must see the new regulations at work. These regulations must be promulgated by an Order in Council, which will probably be kept back until the Commissioners

have made their final Report; so that some patience will still be required before we shall be enabled to criticise the details of the latest reorganisation of the Civil Service.

### THE DETECTION OF CRIME IN CHINA.

THE Chinese possess no organised detective force, though the officials sometimes visit in disguise the scene of a notable crime for the purpose of making inquiries, and police spies are often locked up with remanded prisoners to try to worm out their secrets. The lower classes being intensely superstitious, the judicial investigation of crime usually takes place at night. The judgment hall is a lofty building of wood, unceiled, and bare of furniture save for the raised dais at the north end, where is seated the presiding magistrate, attended by his secretaries, clerks, and lictors. The only light comes from paper lanterns or cotton wicks in oil-cups, which but serve to bring into prominence the weird shadows flitting about the corners and lurking among the woodwork of the roof. Silence prevails, the few spectators watching the proceedings standing like statues. The accused, dragged from the darkness and filth of a Chinese prison, is forced to kneel before the judgment-seat throughout the trial. Weakened by ill-treatment and appalled by his own superstitious imaginings, he often requires only a little judicious terrorising to elicit a full confession of his guilt. If he prove obdurate, witnesses are called. From these no oath or affirmation is demanded; the breaking of a saucer and other forms for administering an oath to a Chinaman laid down in English lawbooks being quite unknown in Chinese courts. Any hesitation or refusal to answer the magistrate's questions—for he is judge, jury, and crown prosecutor all in one, and no counsel for the defence is allowed—is punished by slaps on the cheek or the application of the bamboo to the thighs; and similar penalties more severely administered check the giving of false testimony. Should the prisoner, in face of strong evidence, persist in denying his guilt, various persuasive measures are resorted to, such as forcing him to kneel on chains, hanging him up by the thumbs, or suspending him by the neck in a wooden frame so that his toes just touch the ground. All such tortures are illegal; but a confession has to be obtained somehow before sentence can be passed, and cases are many, and the time allowed for settling them short. Seldom can the stoutest rogue, or, alas! innocent man, hold out against such treatment continued throughout the night, and renewed, if necessary, again and again.

When two or more persons are equally suspected of theft or the like, the magistrates often show great ingenuity in detecting the guilty. In cross-examination they are peculiarly skilful in obtaining damaging admissions, their suave manner deceiving the accused as to the importance of the point they inquire about so carelessly. Two instances of extra-judicial methods for ascertaining the culprit among many equally under suspicion deserve to be recorded for their cleverness. Some balls of opium taken from a piratical junk by a revenue cruiser mysteriously disappeared while being transferred to the latter vessel. Opium is very precious in China, and a

ball is easily split up and secreted in the wide sleeves or the voluminous waistband of a Chinese sailor. The commander of the vessel was loth to institute a search of the ship and crew, knowing well the craftiness of his men, and that, even if found, the opium would most probably be in the bundle of some innocent man. He therefore resorted to a plan as simple as it proved effective. In his cabin was, as is usual, a shrine of the Goddess of Mercy and of the Chinese Neptune. Before these deities he instituted a solemn service, which was prolonged till evening. When night fell, he mustered the crew and called them one by one into the dimly-lighted cabin. Here each man had to make solemn declaration of his innocence, kneeling before the images, and, dipping his finger in a saucer of water, to smear his face all over, being warned that, if he were guilty, the divinities would make his face appear streaked with black. When the thief's turn came, he tried to outwit the gods by rubbing his finger on the bottom of the saucer; but, to his horror, when he reached the light, his face was all over black marks, the wily commander having held the saucer over a lamp before commencing the experiment.

In another case, where several servants were suspected of theft, each man was given a bamboo of the same length, marked with his name, which had to be deposited in an urn before a small shrine in the outer prison where they were confined. The officer announced that the culprit's rod would grow, by interposition of Providence, one inch during the night. The prisoners were then locked up, no watch being kept on the urn. On the reassembling of the court, one rod was found to be an inch shorter than the rest, as the thief had, under cover of the darkness, endeavoured to circumvent the supposed divine power by biting a bit off his rod.

When any article disappears from a private house and one of the inmates is suspected of purloining it, it is usual, before having recourse to the magistrate, whose underlings exact huge fees for doing anything, or nothing, to call in a priest and hold a commination service. This consists in invoking the evil spirits and bribing them by offerings and music to hound the culprit to death within the year. It continues for three days and nights—if the terrified thief does not confess and make restitution before that time, a result very frequently achieved. Europeans living in China have tried this method, but not with much success, as the gonging and other discordant sounds which constitute the 'music' so effectually drive away sleep that the neighbouring foreigners insist on its being intermitted during the night, and so, say the Chinese, spoil the charm.

Of late years, Chinese newspapers on the European model have been started, and are well supported in the matter of advertisements. So now, the loser of bank-notes or other portable property can, and very frequently does, announce his loss in good Chinese in the columns of one of the three leading dailies, offering suitable rewards for the recovery of his property and the detection of the thief. The European settlement at Shanghai alone of all the towns of China employs regular detectives at the expense of the ratepayers. When, if ever, the Chinese government will follow the example set them by this 'western' community, it is impossible to predict.

### WOMAN'S WIT.

[When Conrad III. was in 1138 proclaimed Emperor of Germany, the Duke of Wittenberg refused to acknowledge him as such. The Emperor therefore besieged the Duke, who had taken refuge in his fortified town of Weinsberg. The Duke in the end was forced to yield; whereupon the indignant Emperor declared his intention of putting all to fire and sword, but granted permission to the women to depart in safety, and to carry with them whatever they regarded as most precious. The Duchess of Wittenberg, taking advantage of this concession, with ready wit took her husband the Duke upon her back. Her example was followed by the other women; and the Emperor, seeing them thus come out, with the Duchess at their head, was touched by the spectacle, and pardoned the men for the sake of their wives.]

THEY are hushed—the hoarse voices of battle,

The clashing of shields,

For at sundown, despairing of succour,

The proud city yields.

Then fill me the ruby-red beaker

Brim-high at the spring;

To-morrow we drink amid plenty

'Wass-hael!' to the king!

Oh, sweeter than toil of the bondsman,

Than hawking of lord,

Is the snort of the earth-spurning charger,

The play of the sword.

What, ho! are they pleading for mercy,

The treacherous foe?

Shall we listen with many a brother

Laid silent and low?

Nay, nay; let the women and children

Go forth with their best

Of jewels and house-gear and linen—

Short shrift for the rest.

Oh, sweeter than toil of the bondsman,

Than hawking of lord,

Is the snort of the foam-whitened charger,

The play of the sword.

They come—over-burdened, I warrant,

With treasurings rare;

Wives, mothers, and matrons—by Odin!

'Tis men that they bear!

'Have mercy, O army victorious!

You bid us go free,

With the gold and the gems that we value,

The babes at our knee;

But dearer than house and the children,

Wherever we roam,

Are the treasures we bear on our shoulders,

The shields of the home.'

'There are wives by the strand of the ocean,

And maidens as fair,

Who weep through the whirl of the spinning,

And shield us with prayer;

For the sake of those watching and waiting

Afar by the sea,

For the love and the faith of the women,

Pass on—ye are free!

Oh, sweeter than carnage and glory,

Than jewels and gauds,

Is the neigh of the home-coming charger,

The sheathing of swords.

C. A. DAWSON.

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